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THE
DOCTRINE
OF
A PROVIDENCE,

ILLUSTRATED AND APPLIED IN A
SERMON,
PREACHED TO A CONGREGATION OF
PROTESTANT DISSENTERS,
AT NOTTINGHAM, JULY 29, 1784;
BEING THE DAY APPOINTED FOR
A GENERAL THANKSGIVING,
ON THE CONCLUSION OF THE LATE
DESTRUCTIVE WAR.

BY THE REV. GEORGE WALKER, F.R.S.

L O N D O N :

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T O

THE RIGHT HONOURABLE

WILLIAM PITT, Esq.

S I R,

I HOPE the addressing you, without a previous permission, will not be considered as an unpardonable offence. A mind actuated by the great principles of religion and liberty, is apt to overlook many of the puny forms of life, and to have no apprehension of wrong, where it is not conscious of a wrong, or an indecorum, that is not founded in nature. Di-

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stinction

stinction of rank does not destroy
 the relation of fellow-citizen; and
 the high station to which you are
 called, and the high expectation of
 your country from you, bring this
 relation home to every subject of
 these kingdoms. The nation pro-
 mises itself from you, Sir, that rare
 union of abilities and integrity,
 without which no falling country
 can be stayed from ruin. 'Tis not
 a common glory that has immor-
 talized your name, and the cir-
 cumstance of being placed, like
 your illustrious Father, on the seat
 of power and trust, by the con-
 current voice of the people, is what
 the Romans would have deemed a
 happy omen; as it excites in every
 patriot

patriot breast the hope that you will pursue his glorious course, so it cannot fail to excite a virtuous ambition in your own breast. But be assured, Sir, of this, that you will not save your country, nor answer the expectations that are formed of you, by treading in the dull hackneyed road of government. A nation brought to the very brink of destruction, by the poor tricks of vulgar souls, by a long progress of corruption, prodigality, and rapine, is not to be rescued by pursuing their wretched system. Depend upon the rectitude of your own mind, and upon your country; shew, by great and generous and virtuous plans, that you are the saviour, pointed

out by Providence, and you will need no other dependance, or other dependancies will accommodate themselves to your wishes. Try the ways of plain common sense, and simple honesty; the nation is sick of all mysterious crooked politics; trust to public judgment, and public gratitude, for support; court not parliamentary factions; nor suffer the last resources of the nation to be wasted on the hirelings of office, whose importance springs only out of the weakness, or the wickedness of the minister. A great minister, who stands upon the ground of public confidence, can do without their voice, and smile at their impotent attacks. The nation
at

at large, Sir, has learnt to estimate their prostitute opposition, and it is even with indignation, that it ever beholds a merit stamped on men destined by nature to obscurity, or by vice to infamy. Men are judged by their companions, ministers by their associates; let not the fairness of your own views be blasted by the suspicion, the incurable suspicion, that adheres to other characters. Nor will it be enough, Sir, to rescue your country out of her present distresses, unless you place her on a ground, from which she may look forward to continued health and vigour. The revival of a purer legislature, and a purer morality among the

mafs of the people, are the two
 falutary medicines, on which all
 depends ; all other applications are
 but illufory palliatives, and death
 muft enfue. Minifters are apt to
 think lightly of morals ; and cer-
 tainly, where it is in the view of a
 minifter to deftroy, and not to fave,
 they act confiftently therein. But
 many a fine fpun fyftem of politics
 has been brought to nothing, merely
 by neglecting this little latent prin-
 ciple in the conftitution of man,
 and many a proud and powerful
 nation to difgrace and ruin, by
 wantonly or careleffly abandoning
 this principle to corruption. In a
 corrupt and profligate ftate of na-
 tional manners, all calculations and
 projects

projects must deceive ; for men are reckoned to be men, when in truth they have ceased to be men. The passions are, as it were, the *main spring*, the stimulating source of the movements of a human being ; but the *regulating spring* is the moral principle ; without this, the machine observes no time, it subserves to no useful purpose. These two reforms are so consentaneous to human nature, and to the constitution of the great spirit that actuates the universe, as to be attended with no untoward and intractable difficulties. It is a want of honest will, rather than a want of power, that repels the attempt.

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That there may ever be found in you, Sir, a heart to will, a head to contrive, a spirit to enterprize, and a hand to execute all that may establish your own glory, on your country's good, is the honest wish of,

S I R,

Your respectful and obedient

humble Servant,

NOTTINGHAM,
Oct. 9, 1784.

G. WALKER.

 PSALM XLVII. 7.

*God is the King of all the Earth; Sing ye
his Praises with Understanding.*

THE belief of a Providence superintending the universe, which wisdom and goodness has formed, is almost as universal as the belief of a Deity at all; for the mere acknowledgment of a God, without the acknowledgment of his providence, is very little short of pure Atheism. A Governor of the world is more important to man than the Creator of it; for we had better not have been, than not continue to be under the protection and ordering of a powerful, wise, and good being. The religion of all nations, even the most foolish that has ever disgraced the reason of man, is founded upon this conviction; as the immediate view of all worship, of prayer, sacrifice, or whatever religious offering, is certainly to conciliate the favour, or to
avert

avert the anger of that superior being or beings, who are supposed to be present to terrestrial affairs, and controul the events of human life. It is however of more importance to us, to know, that this is the clear unambiguous doctrine of revelation: the whole mosaic history, the dispensation to the Jews, the history of the Jewish nation, are the history of Providence in it's actings to the world at large, or to that peculiar people. The devotional writings of David, the moral lessons of Solomon, and the messages of the prophets proceed upon no other principle; while the dispensation of Christianity, the prophecies of the New Testament, and the special promises of the gospel, are all direct appeals to the continual agency and government of God.

But it is not less approved by the consent of ages, by the religion of all nations, or by the testimony of revelation, than by the evidence of fact; for to exclude a God from the creation, is not a more bold and more irrational position, not more contradictory to the appearances of nature, than

than to exclude him from the government of the world, which he is supposed to have created. The one asks as much power, and wisdom, and goodness, as the other. The philosopher may talk, and talk justly, of the laws of nature; he may deduce the motions of the solar system from the great principle of gravitation; but if there be not a God to give continual energy and direction to this principle, no present situation of the universe could be preserved the same for the next moment, and all would tend by a progressive change to disorder and ruin. This is as demonstrable from mere mechanical principles, as that the laws of nature operate at all. The same conclusion may be easily illustrated in the history of our globe. There are as many instruments of destruction connected with our earth as of blessing. The winds, the waters, and the fire, which are around us or in us, without the restraint of that good Being, whose servants they are, would in some of the situations and changes, which are continually taking place, be let loose to a general ruin, and diffuse over the whole face of the earth, that desolation

folation which they sometimes awfully scatter over particular portions of it. We know no particular reason from the fixed laws of nature, why the sweeping hurricanes and overwhelming tides, which lately desolated the West Indian Islands, should, at that period, have been confined to that portion of the globe; for they have been experienced in every portion of it, and if they were released at once, and in their utmost fury, would instantly terminate the world to us, and us to the world. Who, without horror, reads of the tremendous earthquakes, which, but yesterday, threatened to annihilate the kingdoms of Sicily and Italy; yet subterraneous fires, and the principles of earthquakes, are diffused over the whole globe, and without a dependance on the Being at whose command they are, would make every inhabitant of the earth fear the ground he treads upon, and destroy all present enjoyment by the instantaneous apprehension of a general destruction.*

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* There is hardly one phenomenon of nature, which, if attentively viewed, does not witness the continual presence and action of an over-ruling Providence.

The passions and vices of men require not less the controuling power of Providence. Though the elements of nature were always at peace with us, Man would be sufficient for his own destruction, if an over-ruling God did not say to him, as to the seas in their anger, thus far, and no farther. Few are the destructive wars, the eruptions of conquering nations, the ruins of states and empires, for which a wise and moral reason can be assigned in man,

vidence. The theory of the weather, is probably no other than the theory of a special Providence. The same circumstances remaining, there is the utmost diversity in the seasons; and although some of the great and general variations appear to be connected with the laws of motion, which affect our system, yet many very important deviations from the orderly succession of nature, are not to be explained by any philosophical principle whatever. The sudden and instantaneous transitions from heat to cold, and from cold to heat, are absolutely unaccountable as a mere mechanic effect, which must be subject to a more orderly law. A length of season shall be uninterruptedly dry and warm, and the same elements remaining and in the same relation to each other, a change is in a moment effected, on which the most important consequences to vegetable and animal life depend. The next returning season all is reversed. If fixed material causes were alone

man, as the actor; they are as little to be accounted for, from the better principles of the human nature, as the sudden fury of the elements from the general and orderly laws of the material world. A single eruption of the Tartar nations has in a few years, and with as little remorse as the winds, or seas, destroyed nearly as many millions, as Europe at this moment contains. In our own days, the Chinese have put to the sword three millions of people;

alone productive of these effects, the continuance of an unremitting drought or rain, would at any period be not at all wonderful, though it involved the utter ruin of that portion of the globe, on which it fell. It is in vain to have recourse to the winds, as the mechanical cause of these interesting variations; they are utterly inadequate to the solution; and if they were, the difficulty is still as great, to account for the phenomena of the winds themselves. The nice attemperament of the seasons, of hot and cold, dry and moist, calm and wind, so as never to frustrate the dependence of man and all animal nature, is one of those beneficent operations, which the measured action of mechanical causes appears to be utterly inadequate to: the phenomenon does not at all answer to measured movement, and God appears to have reserved this important part of his government to his own immediate agency. At least no minute philosopher has ever yet discovered any other agent.

people; they have exterminated a nation at a blow. Another world was ravaged and unpeopled by a few Spaniards; and why man, who, in these terrible instances, appears to have no feeling for his own species, is not continually acting for the destruction of his race, is only to be ascribed to the interposition of that Providence which is pleased sometimes to visit us in it's anger, and anon save us by it's mercy. Man is but the instrument of God, as the winds, and seas, and fire are; and equally capable of being a scourge or a blessing.

Though we thus see the hand of Providence bared in the sudden and awful convulsions, both of the elements, and of man, and in the limits which it is pleased to assign to these convulsions; yet we see not always so clearly the ends which Providence subserves thereby. We generally know, that the rudest shocks of nature, conduce to the better health of nature, to the rendering it more salutary both to vegetable and animal life. We believe, that they may be the instruments of divine dis-

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pleasure,

pleasure, may be designed to exhibit to forgetful man, the presence of that Great Being, who directs the storm, and dispose a people, abandoned to sensuality, to turn to God, by turning to sober piety and virtue. So in the great revolutions of states and empires, we cannot immediately look behind the veil of Providence, and discern the mind of the great actor; but time often brings forth the discovery, and reveals to our view, the greatest, the noblest, and the most beneficent design. Providence exalted Nebuchadnezzar to be the executioner of it's displeasure on the Jews, and other offending nations, and having answered this end, his extended empire fell into the hands of the more virtuous Cyrus, the founder of the Persian Monarchy, who was to subserve other views; particularly to be the restorer of the Jewish nation, and ultimately provide a theatre, on which the great Redeemer of the world was to make his appearance. The ambition of Alexander overthrew the building of Cyrus; but Alexander was a wonderful instrument in the hands of God, to spread the arts, the civility, and the wisdom

wisdom of the Greeks, through the regions of the East, and finally through the whole of the then known world; when by the conquests of Rome, the Eastern and the Western worlds were first brought together, were united under one government, discipline, and manners. Then the fullness of time was come, and improved man was prepared to receive the rational, the enlightened, and moral religion of Christ. The Roman empire was supported by the hand of Providence, till it had answered the views of Providence; till as a channel, fitted for the purpose, it had disseminated Christianity through the rational part of the world; when, having answered this end, Providence was pleased, by the eruption of the northern nations, to put a period to the all-grasping ambition of this lordly empire, and break it into those smaller states, which are more fitted for the enjoyment and the improvement of man. Then the stern manly spirit of the north, mixed with the civility, the arts, and science, of the Greeks and Romans, the human character was perfected, beyond what Greece or Rome ever knew;

the religion of Christ was extended into the remotest regions, and by the discovery of America, and the rapid progress of a more facile commerce, a door has been opened to carry all the blessings of man to every family of mankind*.

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* The two great events of the irruption of the Northern nations, and the promulgation of Christianity, have given as it were a new face to the globe, and a new character to man. Though not refined or learned themselves, our Northern ancestors brought with them a strength of genius, and a finer principle of humanity, which has enabled them to surpass their masters both in wisdom and in manners. Till these rude nations revealed themselves to the South, the estimation of the female sex was utterly unknown, and how great an effect this has had on the good temper and best felicity of human life may be known to every one, by comparing the state of domestic manners among the earlier Asiatics, the Greeks and Romans, with the social and domestic character of even the rudest European nation. That freedom, which they seemed to annex to a citizen from the moment of his birth, has not been extirminated by all the selfishness and cruelty of ambition; legal liberty, that wonderful idea, sprung out of their familiar practice; and where legal liberty appears to be done away, it's influence is still felt in a system of manners and usages derived from the same source, which controuls the rude hand of power, softens,

This view of Providence, as superintending the affairs of this world, controuling them by it's will, and rendering the course of them subservient to it's views, might be much more particularly and forcibly illustrated, so as to strike conviction on almost every mind; but the learning of the

softens, tempers, and gives the law even to despotism itself. It has broken, apparently for ever broken, the system of great and monstrous empires, by that firm tone, which it has given to the human mind, that capacity of equal resistance which it has communicated to man, wherever their character has established itself,

It is remarkable that Christianity, which was almost a cotemporary event, has wonderfully co-operated with the whole spirit and genius of these manly sons of the North. Christianity is in all it's application to the human mind, favourable to liberty, to humanity, to generosity, to order, and to law. By ridding it of the debasements of superstition, and introducing to it a sublime and moral religion, it has conduced to rid it of all contracted and contracting prejudices, to give a vigour to the mind, and carry it through all the lengths of rational and liberal enquiry. It has fallen in with the social and domestic liberty of the North, it embraces the abhorrence of slavery in all it's forms, it teaches to man his individual as well as relative importance in the world of God; in fine, it

the school is expected to be very cautiously introduced into the pulpit ; yet this much seemed necessary, to do justice to this important truth, the doctrine of a particular as well as a general Providence, which is the doctrine of my text ; which is the foundation of all virtuous religion, which tempers human prosperity, which consoles human suffering, which can be never too deeply

discovers in the very counsels and will of God himself, a sanction of all the manly and generous maxims of our Northern progenitors.

The coterporaneous production of these two great operating causes of the improvement of man, is no feeble argument of a Providence, attentive to the good of man, in those seasons which to it's wisdom seem fit. We limit the blessings of Christianity to those countries where it's name is owned ; but Christianity is felt where it's name is formally rejected. The religion of Mahomet is indebted for every excellence it has to boast of to the discoveries of the gospel, and the sentiments and the manners which are peculiar to Christianity, and to Christian nations, have spread, and are spreading, into those countries which own neither the Christian nor the Mahometan name. The Russians on the East, and the British Americans on the West, may probably be the instruments of Providence to extend both the name, and all it's blessings, over the whole globe.

deeply wrought into every mind; in fine, which is the acknowledged object of national and individual view in our present assembling. "God is the King of all the earth, sing ye his praises with understanding."

Under this acknowledgment of Providence, as the secret controuler and director of the great events of this world, we are assembled to thank God. To thank him! why so our rulers have at length thought fit, and I would to God, that they had never had a worse thought. Whether they feel the gratitude, which they invite, I pretend not to decide; but I fear the national temper does not kindly accord with the invitation. There is a sense of national humiliation, of national loss, of national affliction, that beats back the thought of gratitude. It requires a very enlightened and elevated piety, such as the mass of a people never reach to, to find a motive to thankfulness in the very bosom of suffering. Gratitude is a chearful act, and does not readily spring up in a desponding breast. We have no victories to proclaim,

no triumph over our old implacable foe, no addition of territory, of wealth, of commerce, to our beloved country; but all is a sad tale of ruined armies, humbled fleets, empire lost, sinking commerce, dissipated treasure, oppressive taxes, factious politics, with every symptom of national decline. Whatever therefore be the language of the proclamation, I would not affect to turn nature out of her course, and speak the language of joy in the very ear of sorrow. Whatever be the general blessings of peace, and however specious the topic of it's praise, it may be a national evil, and be abhorrent to all sense of national gratitude; but yet, with the most unpalatable circumstances, it may be an evil wisely chosen.

The peace, which this day commemorates, considered absolutely in itself, is without doubt an evil; it holds forth to the world an once great, but humbled nation; but it's demerits are to be charged on a war, which never promised well, which, in it's principle, outraged both God and man; which, in it's conduct, dashed every expectation to the ground, and in it's obstinate continuance, might have
involved

involved us in irrecoverable ruin. No one feels the humiliation of a country, which he once gloried in, and which he still passionately loves, more deeply than myself; but as peace, or unconditional submission, must be the last resource of every nation which aspires not to victory; and as neither the principle nor the conduct of the war, derived to us any hope of succour from either God or man; I submit my mind to the last retreat from greater ills; and inglorious as the peace is, I sincerely thank God for it, and next to God, the authors of it, as the deliverers of a devoted country. But it is not my intention to insist on this topic. Here I am no party man, nor, in a bad sense, I hope, any where; and therefore, however discordant our opinions on this subject may be, I have chosen for the subject of my present address to you, a ground on which we all may meet; an acknowledgment of God as the great ruler of the world, a submission to his will, the consolation which the wisdom and rectitude of his Providence inspires, and a thankfulness for the mercies, which, in the midst of our chastise-
ments,

ments, he is still pleased to leave us the possession of.

Who can forbear to acknowledge the hand of Providence, in the fate of this country? If national and individual crime be the deserved object of providential punishment, we have enough of crime of every description, which might justify Providence in a severer punishment than it has yet been pleased to inflict upon us. And the finger of Providence appears to be visible in the ordering of it; no gradual decline marks the ordinary course of human events, but a strange and precipitate descent from the highest glory and prosperity proclaims the venerable power, which meant to humble us. By the most irreligious minds, and which are little apt to take God into any account, the fall is contemplated with astonishment, and they confess it in all it's circumstances, to be beyond all human probability. A little cloud from the West makes it's appearance, our confident rulers hardly deign to look upon it, as if unworthy of their serious notice; but under the direction of him,
who

who orders the rise and fall of nations, it spreads wider and wider, darkens the whole hemisphere, and breaks at length on Britain in a storm, of which, not even the most sanguine can say what will be the issue. Yet the storm was progressive enough to have been avoided by common wisdom, in any period of it's approach, if God, who turns wisdom into folly, had not designed our severe correction. To have accumulated so many evils, to have persevered after every invitation to retreat, and, as if we were in love with ruin, to have adopted only those measures which must accelerate and aggravate our doom, nor ever once to have changed to better counsels, till the moment of penitence was past, is so contrary to the meanest policy, and even to self-preservation, as plainly to point out the over-powering hand of an avenging Providence. And why! I pray, thus marked out by Providence for it's most awful punishments? but because, as a nation, we had miserably turned our face from God, and thrown back to him as useless or disgusting, that religious character, that sobriety, that justice, that mercy,

mercy, which our ancestors transmitted to us, together with that generous sympathy with the rights of human nature, that virtuous zeal in the cause of equal liberty and law, which their honest and magnanimous example had set us.

Except in the way of common suffering, we have yet made no attonement for our public iniquities; indignation sleeps; a stupid passiveness of wrong marks the last parting of the national spirit; that gallant virtuous spirit, which but yesterday would have been pained to hear from any quarter of the globe of violated rights, and the cruel triumphs of power, but which the disgrace, the prostitution of our country's honour would have roused to madness; the wicked great men, who have driven us on to infamy and ruin, insult over our calamities, confederate for the destruction of the very forms of our constitution, and presume on a national protection, as from a national participation of crime*. Yet with these deadly symptoms,

* The wound which has been given to the honour, to the just, humane, and virtuous character of our country,

toms, I do not say, that we are marked for utter ruin ; that is for God to determine ; and the present suspension of his anger encourages the hope of better things ; but if ruin, absolute ruin, should hastily follow, it would not be near so wonderful as the revolution which has already taken place before our eyes. Yet terrible are the evils short of this termination, which an all-ruling Providence may bring on an ungrateful and apostate people. The calamities

country, during little more than the period of a war which has been pregnant with every mischief, is more fatal than the loss of empire, of commerce, and of wealth. Vicious minds feel not this humiliation, but the honour of a nation once lost, all that can support the greatness of a nation is gone. The magnanimity which is equal to every arduous encounter, depends upon a generous sense of honour ; and it will be found in nations, as well as in individuals, that they live and die together. A people once broken to shame of whatever kind, is familiarized to it in every view. This symptom, therefore, I dread more than any other. I have lived in the day, when an Englishman was more proud of his country's honour, than of his country's prosperity ; when the betrayer of it would have roused the general indignation, nor appeased it, but with his life. Rejoycing in our liberty, as the best boon of Heaven to us, Englishmen pitied every wretch

ties which every one deploras, have been in a course, however rapid, of orderly accumulation, and give reason to conclude, that there are yet in the store of heaven, nearer and more touching distresses; if these are insufficient to wake us to thought and to repentance. The horrors of war have yet affected us only at a distance, but at this distance has been spilt much of our most generous blood, and our treasures wasted,

wretch who had it not; and if they could not restore this blessing to all of their kind, would as soon have met the Devil in their walk, as be the instruments of oppressing it in any. How this spirit hath departed from us, let Corfica, St. Vincents, America tell, and the very feeble voice of indignation, which so novel a conduct of this once glorious nation, has excited. It was our pride that, in the road to commerce and greatness, we trod not over the carcases of slaughtered millions, this was left to Spaniards, to Portuguese, to Hollanders; but this virtuous, this dear distinction, is gone; we are now upon the records of history, among the merciless destroyers of our species. Every nation may produce a villain; public vengeance alone asserts the nation's innocence; and till this vengeance breaks forth in all its solemnity of punishment on the actors of these great enormities, we adopt their guilt; and the God to whom a moral vengeance belongs will exact a national atonement.

wasted, without answering one end, for which we rushed into that detested war; a national bankruptcy stares us in the face; our commerce, the source of our wealth and power, has been regularly declining, it is a common plunder committed to the avarice and ambition of every European state; the increasing weight of taxes sits heavy upon all, and wrings from many an one, the penny which he knows not how to spare, while the national necessities present nothing to our view, but the prospect of increasing burthens. But if all this, together with the loss of public character, and public spirit, be not enough correction to a people, whom but a few years past exhibited as the envy of the world; soon may the fences be broken down, which, under Providence, have hitherto shut out an invader; and an invader, whom a long-fostered enmity and jealousy will teach to riot in our misery. That these peaceful fields will ever be trod by an insulting foe, is, with our present prospects, no very improbable issue; it has been feared in much better days, and our security from this novel terror, from all the alarm, confusion,

sion, and mischief, which it will spread, depends upon those exertions, upon that œconomy, that virtue, which it were almost a miracle again to look for; upon that support of our navy, which a sinking commerce does not promise, and which one wicked and mad administration may rapidly destroy*. But there still remain two great and wasting evils, which Heaven, in it's mercy has withheld, but which the instant will of the great avenger of
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* Many wrap themselves up amidst the novel terrors which seem to approach us, in their hope of British courage. This, they proudly boast, whenever it shall be called forth, in the defence of every thing that is worth contending for, will work wonders, and deliverance rests on this last resource. I think as highly of this, as any one; but in the whole progress of our late disgrace and distress, British courage has never been impeached; yet, we know not how, unless by the ordering of that Being who can make every human means of none effect, a courage which, in other instances, would have decided the fate of empires, has been wasted on the winds. The loss of national character also, in other views, may involve the loss of national courage. Greece and Rome still exist on the face of the globe, but Greeks and Romans are no where to be found. The manners, the laws, and policy, that gave a soul to the inhabitants, are dead.

of crime may let loose in all their horror upon us, Famine and Sickness. Either of these would dreadfully shut in the scene*.

I do not aggravate, I do not push to despondency. I speak truth, and the truth, however harsh, which alone can operate to good†. For who will not acknowledge,

* To these yet unexperienced evils, may not improbably be added the loss of our national liberty. The late popular resentment of a determined and desperate Aristocracy may seem to promise better things; I rejoice in the promise; I hope information entered into the resentment, and that an undistinguishing idiot loyalty did not vitiate the whole. Without a well-informed national spirit, the very effort may be fatal; it was on such efforts that the ruin of the Danish and Swedish liberties were built.

† A smooth concealment of the evils which are approaching on an individual or a nation, is folly in the extreme. To prophecy well, in the face of ill, is the part of knaves; to believe those lying prophecies, is the part of fools, who are destined to be the victims of their credulity. If the symptoms of this country have not every unpromising aspect, the writer has no power of judgment whatever. But he despairs only of these symptoms making their due impression; grant this effect, and that the temper of Britons once breaks forth again, he has the fullest dependance on the resources of his country, he would not fear her becoming again an object of veneration to the whole world.

knowledge, that we are turned the summit of our glory, of our prosperity, of our strength; and few nations have risen to the height that we have done, and made a pause in their descent. But not only as the punisher of crime, is God to be acknowledged, but methinks it is not difficult to discover his agency in other views, as we are the instruments in his hands of subserving the wise and beneficent designs of his providence. We have been highly exalted among nations, favoured with the greatest blessings that can fall to the lot of man. We were, therefore, selected by Providence, to be the founder of a new people, who are to give a new face to the other half of our world, and be the source of the most interesting events; that they might commence their course with all the advantages of knowledge, law, liberty, and religion, and thus disseminate wider those great mercies of God to regions, and to people, which have been hitherto known only to ignorance and barbarity. We were upheld and favoured by Providence, though not solely, yet ultimately, to cherish this new nation
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of Britons in the other world; we triumphed over the foes of Britain, while we were prosecuting the quarrel of British America, and having placed it on a solid foundation of independence and power, we are suffered to fall under the weight of our corruptions and crimes, to fall before the very foe that we so lately had humbled and degraded. Providence will bring on the fate of our enemies in their turn, and having answered the views of Providence to us, and to our descendants in America, they will pay the punishment of their equal or greater iniquities.

It becomes us, therefore, reverently to acknowledge the Providence whose hand is so conspicuous in our treatment, as in all the revolutions of this sublunary world. Yes! as surely as it is the hand of God that keeps yonder Sun in the firmament; as it is his voice that bids him to shine out in all his splendour, or wraps him in clouds from our view, as it is his will that blesses us with health and plenty, or punishes us with famine and sickness; so does his superintending power direct, controul,

and fix the great events of life; He is the Great Manager, and we, with all our fancied policy and activity, are but the doers of his pleasure.

With the general acknowledgment of his Providence, let us learn a decent submission to his will, and a disposition to own God, to serve him, as well in his chastisements as his mercies. Though summoned to an act of thanksgiving, we have matter enough of humility before us; assuredly no national advantages, no national prosperity can be the theme of our acknowledgment. But there is an elevated piety, which may mix with, and give a dignity to our humiliation, a sublimer thankfulness, which respects the dispensations of the great and wise God, which contemplates the benignity of a Father in the correction of a Father, in the hope of recovery to his favour, and in the consciousness of those blessings, which he is pleased still to preserve to us. Blessings which, while preserved, no Briton can yet hope to find in equal purity, on any other spot of the globe. Though fallen, we are still in the hands of Providence,

vidence, and a return to God, and to the character which he approves and rewards, may secure these blessings to us. And can we, any one of us, my friends, take a nobler support to our minds, in all the contingencies of life, in all our private and public interests, than the presence and favour of this great and venerable Being? But, alas! I know not how it is, when we are speaking on these topics, we are thought to be speaking only in the character of our profession, and the lesson is received as fit only for the sanctity of such a place and hour as this. As if it became us only to put on the appearance of piety and virtue, and it were not equally fit, that piety and virtue should inspire the heart, and influence the conduct of you all, in every place, and in every hour. External prosperity is not essential to the happiness of man; but a state of conciliation with God is absolutely necessary, necessary to our comfort, to our virtue. Strange would it be, if man, who is the work of God, and amongst all his works here, destined to bear his image, should not continually need his presence and favour, to work out

all his good, to controul his passions, to give force to his better will, to preserve him in his proper character, to inspire his heart, and give him that fortitude, which, in the road of manly and christian duty, may enable him to meet trial, danger, and death, with decency and dignity. Deserting God! is it wonderful that we should be deserted by God? and who is bold enough to say, that, in whatever condition, he can do without God, the creature without the Creator?

That personal virtue and peace, which the presence and conciliated favour of God secures to every individual, may if the return to God and goodness be more general, reward and raise the most dejected nation: Oh God! that our humiliation may ever work for us this solid blessing, may recover us to a sense of our national crimes; those crimes, which, if pushed to their utmost length, must infallibly work the utter destruction of every people. May we check that rage of pleasure, that abandonment of all sober virtue, which we may well conclude to have alienated God from

from us, but which hath certainly dissolved the strength of the state, corrupted the seat of government, dissipated all public virtue, and left us without the ordinary means of retrieval. May we re-assert the character of Britons; shake off that national indifference, which is the worst symptom of decline; compel our great men to wear the face of good men, to deserve the national trust, by national services; and prevent at least the ruin of our national liberty, which perhaps only national misfortune has saved to us. A well informed public spirit is the associate of every virtue; for only the friend of man, of virtue, and of God, knows the full value of the blessings which God has favoured us with. Give proof, therefore, of your private virtue, by your attention to the public welfare, be obstinately upright in all public duties, cherish your country's friends, and sternly set your face against all your country's foes.

The most formidable of these foes lies in your own breasts, in the temptation at any moment to act beneath the character of

a Protestant and a Briton. He who merits these names, who would be thought to be the man for whom his ancestors designed them, will scorn every thing unhandsome, base, and criminal; will spurn the tempter from him, be always at his post, and ready to answer every virtuous summons. Various circumstances vary the exercise of this integrity and fortitude; while the path of the many, on whom however all depends, is much circumscribed, and in a patriot view, confined almost to one single line, integrity in the choice of those, who represent us all, and to whom, all our dearest interests are committed. This is the great Palladium of England; this is our glorious distinction from every nation of the earth; this is our treasure, which he, who basely and wickedly abandons to the destroyer, is accursed both of God and man. From this, all our religion, law, and liberty sprung; on this they still rest; and when this is gone, we are numbered with the slaves of other nations, who have neither their property, their bodies, nor their minds, at their disposal. I am no republican, no enemy to monarchy; such as
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the constitution of the British government has adopted, and subservient to the views of this government, I revere the Prince, who is willing to be the instrument of public happiness, and wishes not to move beyond the line, in which power may safely and usefully be confided to a poor mortal. But Kings are no Gods of my adoration; they weigh not a feather in my scale against the public good; I do think the democratic or popular part of the constitution, to be the essence, the soul of the whole; I do think the safety of the people to be the supreme law, the supreme object; and that if Kings, or whatever exalted individuals, will not enter, cheerfully enter, into this benevolent view; they ought to be considered and treated, as mere expedients of public good, and be made subservient thereto. Have your eye, therefore, on the representatives of the people, ask yourselves every moment, if their conduct be such as every man of you would act for himself, for his child, for his friend, for his neighbour. There is no other rule; honesty and integrity are universal and immutable; the same in all relations

relations of life; nor does any relation claim peculiar indulgencies; the rule is plain and decisive; and if they cannot answer to this simple test, they are not your representatives, every moment of their trust is dangerous, and though the peace of the community may forbid the instant effects of an honest indignation, yet assuredly, they ought no more to receive the renewal of your trust, than you would confide every thing that is dear to you into the hands of the worst of villains and assassins. There was a time, when the meanest Englishman could judge of his country's welfare, and steadily and conscientiously pursue it. Your power of judgment is not diminished, the virtue of your progenitors is only wanting; but the glorious inheritance, which you received from them, can only be preserved by recurring to the same stern inflexibility, the same well-principled integrity, in every act, on which your country's good depends. Here, as from their immediate, though not their primary source, are found all the misfortunes and disgraces, which darken the face of this once happy island; it
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is not the change of ministers, which can bring back the days of England's peace and glory; ministers are men, and in proportion to the rank from which they are taken, partake in a higher degree of the national corruption; but ministers are of that pliant stuff, that they will be what you please to have them; teach them to despise you, and they will sport with the national interests, as with their own; fearing and respecting you, their very vices will bow to the national expectation. A virtuous parliament is the security for a virtuous administration.

Oh God! that any man, who ever felt the spirit of a Protestant and a Briton within him, can give his irrevocable voice, not only to a fool who may, but to a knave who will, betray him; to one whose profligacy renders him unfit for any private trust, whose prodigality and luxury leave him not the master of himself, who has no other view than to sell for hire a nation's confidence, that he may squander it on his lusts. When I think on what is involved in it, the ruin of what the richest bounty

bounty of God has blessed us with, the humbling every thing that religion, and liberty, and law, make sacred to man, at the feet of lustful power, or precipitating every thing in ruins, to gratify weakness, and obstinacy, and wickedness; I would not act this crime for the treasury of a nation; I would not go with such a load of deliberate guilt into the presence of my God, whenever he shall be pleased to call me, for all that this world has to promise. Yet it is done for the poor draught of intemperance; for the wages of a day; for the hypocritical flattery of a dressed-out superior; for a promise; for a place of dependance and servility. In the hour of public misfortune, you can all cry out, you are sold, you are betrayed. I tell you, You have sold, You have betrayed yourselves; and until every man can lay his hand upon his heart, and say, in the most important act of a citizen and a Briton, I have done what my conscience directs me, what I can answer for, to my child, and to my God; the crime is your's; the punishment will be your's also.

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My rank in life, it may be thought, does not entitle me to speak in so decisive a tone on these high and important subjects. Why! my rank is, indeed, a happy mediocrity; but I have yet to know, that truth and wisdom are annexed to any particular rank; while this I have learnt, that falsehood and folly do not dignify but disgrace superior rank and abilities. Abilities are, however, almost as much out of the question as rank; very ordinary talents are sufficient for the present subject; it requires only an honest and virtuous intention, which is determined to pursue good, with enough of plain sense to detect the sophistry by which interested vicious men would blind the eyes of Britons, and lead them to the precipice. To convert the hardened soul of selfishness, which has abandoned all public affection, and in pursuit of a narrow partial interest, can sacrifice even self, is no part of my hope; but to persuade the many, whose private interests are bound up with those of the public; to persuade them to save themselves, and compel their unprincipled plunderers and betrayers, to yield to their virtuous

tuous demands, is a very reasonable and moderate expectation; and which any one may presume to accomplish, who can suppose, that he is, addressing himself to men, whom a determined profligacy has not devoted to destruction. I fear, that many of our rulers and great men, have looked on the mass of their fellow subjects in this very light, and rejoicing in the assurance of their ruined character, had no wish to recover them to better habits, but contemplated them as an easy, willing prey. But, as I have none of their views on the people, so neither have I the same views of the people. If they have eyes to see the pit, it cannot be that they will rush into it; let the flatteries and wiles of the hunter be what they will, if they know it to be a pit intended for their destruction, it were more natural that they should turn upon the hunter, than upon it. But it is only required to turn away from both, and measure back the steps which have conducted them so near to ruin, and recover the road of security and good.

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In this road, all the view that we have taken of a moral Providence, is spread for your encouragement; the country that you love, and for whose recovery you have virtuously contended, may on your account, be saved and blessed by it's protecting hand. But if not, if you have deemed better of your fellow citizens, than they shall be found to have deserved, and the preponderating many shall weigh down your well-meant efforts, the will of God be done! Though Britain perish, the British character and the blessings of Britain will be preserved and cherished by God, to bring forward in his own good time, a general restoration; and those who fall the intermediate victims to an overwhelming degeneracy and wickedness, will be the dearer in the eye of God, find the noble consolation of his presence, and pass to a reward that is prepared and fitted for them.

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